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ABSTRACT

Although the reader may wish to use the entire American College Testing (ACT) Program Profile for detailed study and comparison, this abstract is prepared to give a brief overview of the highlights contained in that report. The format presented in this abstract might also serve as a model for a brief profile of student characteristics at the local community college. (Author)

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# ABSTRACT OF THE ACT CLASS PROFILE FOR 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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Research Report 7

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# PREFACE

Studies on the characteristics of community college students are of particular interest to the local colleges, the Illinois Community College Board, and to other state agencies. For this reason the ICCB has made arrangements to purchase the ACT data for students enrolled in Illinois public community colleges. This data will serve as a part of the Student Characteristics Subsystem of the new Management Information System at the ICCB. Data that is available from outside sources is relatively inexpensive to obtain and saves the local institutions much time and effort in providing this data for their students.

The primary use of the ACT profile of students enrolled in Illinois public community colleges is to enable the local community colleges to compare the characteristics of their students with the characteristics of other community college students in the state rather than with college and university students. The characteristics of community college students are distinctly different from those of university students. For example, the community college students have lower average ACT scores overall, different educational asperations, and different reasons for going to college than students attending senior institutions.

Although the reader may wish to use the entire ACT Profile Report of 1973-74 Freshmen for detailed study and comparison, this abstract is prepared to give a brief overview of the highlights contained in that report. The format presented in this abstract might also serve as a model for a brief profile of student characteristics at the local community college.

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# INTRODUCTION

The American College Testing Program (ACT) is probably the most widely used testing program by colleges and universities in the Midwest for admission, placement, and counseling purposes. Although not all public community colleges in Illinois require the ACT test for admission, it is one of the most often used standardized national tests in Illinois community colleges. In addition, many high school students take the ACT test during their junior or senior year in high school prior to deciding which college they want to attend and hence their scores are available even if the college does not require them for admission. For these reasons we would expect the sample in this ACT profile to represent primarily full-time students somewhat more than part-time community college students and students directly out of high school more so than students who are older and have enrolled in the community college. Since the students composing the samples in the ACT Class Profiles at the local community colleges will have similar characteristics to those described for the state sample, the particular biases mentioned will not effect the usefulness of the data for comparitive purposes by the individual colleges.

## AVERAGE ACT SCORES OF 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Table 1 below shows a summary of the mean ACT standard scores on the various subtests of the ACT distributed by sex for the freshmen enrolled in Illinois public community colleges during 1973-74 who took the ACT test. This report includes 19,747 students or approximately 15% of all the freshmen enrolled in the Illinois community colleges during the fall of 1973 of 135,237. However, when compared to the full-time freshmen, the report represents approximately 37% of the 53,616 full-time freshmen enrolled in the community colleges of Illinois.

Table 1

MEAN ACT STANDARD SCORES* OF 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

| ACT TEST | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| English | 16.0 | 18.0 | 17.0 |
| Mathematics | 18.5 | 16.7 | 17.6 |
| Social Studies | 17.7 | 16.7 | 17.3 |
| Natural Sciences | 20.3 | 18.8 | 19.5 |
| Composite | 18.3 | 17.7 | 18.0 |
| Number of Students | 9,986 | 9,761 | 19,747 |

* Maximum Standard Score is 36.

The average scores for community college freshmen are lower than the ACT scores for all college freshmen in Illinois.

A comparison of the average ACT scores of Illinois community college freshmen, with ACT scores of all college freshmen in Illinois is shown in Table 2. Since the admission requirements at many four year colleges are based on ACT scores, we would expect community college students to have lower average scores. The community colleges, on the other hand, are expected to serve all students in their community rather than just those with high academic ability.

Table 2

A COMPARISON OF AVERAGE ACT SCORES OF
ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE FRESHMEN WITH
ALL ILLINOIS COLLEGE FRESHMEN

| ACT Test | Illinois Public Community College Freshmen | All Illinois College Freshmen |
|---|---|---|
| English | 17.0 | 18.5 |
| Mathematics | 17.6 | 20.2 |
| Social Studies | 17.3 | 19.0 |
| Natural Science | 19.5 | 21.3 |
| Composite | 18.0 | 19.9 |

## SELF-REPORTED HIGH SCHOOL GRADES

Table 3 shows the average high school grades in the subject areas listed for the 1973-74 freshmen. Students taking the ACT are asked to report their own grades on the profile. Although these are self-

reported grades, studies have shown them to be very reliable. Of particular interest is the fact that women in this report had higher high school grades than men; however, scored lower on the ACT test than did the men.

Table 3

SELF-REPORTED HIGH SCHOOL GRADES FOR 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES AS INDICATED ON ACT PROFILE

| | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| High School English Grades | 2.39* | 2.84* | 2.61* |
| High School Mathematics Grades | 2.06 | 2.31 | 2.19 |
| High School Social Studies Grades | 2.53 | 2.72 | 2.62 |
| High School Natural Science Grades | 2.33 | 2.56 | 2.45 |
| Average for the 4 H.S. Grades (HSA) | 2.34 | 2.62 | 2.48 |

* Mean G.P.A. based on a 4 point scale (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1).

Table 4 below shows the percentage of 1973-74 freshmen in various high school grade average categories. The grade averages are reported on a four point scale (A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0). A majority of the students attending the community colleges are in the C and B grade category, however, a sizable percentage (9%) of the

students were A Students in high school and 4% were D students.

Table 4

PERCENTAGE OF 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN VARIOUS HIGH SCHOOL GRADE AVERAGE CATEGORIES

| High School Average G.P.A. | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.5 - 4.0 | 5% | 13% | 9% |
| 2.5 - 3.4 | 39% | 49% | 44% |
| 1.5 - 2.4 | 51% | 36% | 44% |
| 0.5 - 1.4 | 5% | 2% | 4% |
| 0.0 - 0.4 | 0% | 0% | 0% |

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Table 5 below shows the special educational needs that were indicated by the community college freshmen on the ACT profile. Of particular interest is the large percentage of students who indicate need for assistance in choosing a major (38%), for improving Math skills (51%) and for improving study and writing skills (40%). These special educational needs indicate a special need in the community colleges for adequate counseling services and developmental programs.

Table 6 shows a comparison of the special educational needs indicated by Illinois public community college freshmen and all freshmen in Illinois colleges taking the ACT profile. This comparison indicated that the community college students indicate considerably

greater needs for special educational assistance in the various study skills and in choosing a major than do traditional college students. This again indicates that special services are necessary on the part of the community colleges in meeting these needs.

Table 5

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

| Special Assistance Needed In: | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Choosing a Major | 41% | 34% | 38% |
| Improving Reading Skills | 33% | 27% | 30% |
| Improving Math Skills | 50% | 52% | 51% |
| Improving Study Skills | 45% | 36% | 40% |
| Improving Writing Skills | 40% | 40% | 40% |

Table 6

COMPARISON OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES WITH ALL 1973-74 FRESHMEN TAKING THE ACT TEST IN ILLINOIS

| | Illinois Public Community College Freshmen | All Freshmen in Illinois Colleges |
|---|---|---|
| Choosing a Major | 38% | 33% |
| Improving Reading Skills | 30% | 22% |
| Improving Math Skills | 51% | 41% |
| Improving Study Skills | 40% | 30% |
| Improving Writing Skills | 40% | 34% |

## WHY STUDENTS CHOSE THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

With the enrollments in postsecondary education leveling off or declining there is considerable interest in knowing why students choose a particular college to attend. The 1973-74 Freshmen enrolled in Illinois public community colleges who took the ACT tests indicated what they considered to be the single most important factor in making a college choice on the profile. Table 7 below shows a summary of these responses. The most frequently indicated factor for choosing the community college was "special study program." Location and low cost were also frequently mentioned. This analysis indicates that students are choosing the community colleges primarily because they are offering the programs that they are interested in pursuing and only secondarily because of low cost.

Table 7

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN MAKING COLLEGE CHOICE INDICATED BY 1973-74 FRESHMEN ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES ON ACT PROFILE

| Top Ten Factors | Percentage of Students Indicating as Most Important Factor |
|---|---|
| 1. Special Study Program | 30% |
| 2. Location | 18% |
| 3. Low Cost | 9% |
| 4. Parents Influence | 8% |
| 5. High School Counselors Influence | 6% |
| 6. Financial Aid Offer | 5% |
| 7. High Scholastic Standards | 4% |
| 8. Campus Visit or Tour | 4% |
| 9. Good Faculty | 3% |
| 10. College Admission Counselor | 3% |

## ESTIMATED FAMILY INCOME OF 1973-74 FRESHMEN

Table 8 below shows a summary of the family incomes of 1973-74 Freshmen as estimated by the student on the ACT profile. Although 36 percent of the students indicated that they did not know their family incomes and another 6 percent considered this information confidential, the data provided is useful for comparative purposes for the individual community colleges.

Table 8

ESTIMATED FAMILY INCOME OF 1973-74 FRESHMEN
ENROLLED IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES
AS INDICATED ON THE ACT PROFILE

| Estimated Annual Family Income | Number of Students | Percent of all Responding | Percent of Those Indicating Estimated Income | Cumulative Percent of Those Indicating Estimated Income |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than $ 3,000 | 513 | 3% | 5% | 5% |
| 3,000-5,999 | 1091 | 6 | 10 | 15 |
| 6,000-7,499 | 967 | 5 | 9 | 24 |
| 7,500-8,999 | 1317 | 7 | 12 | 36 |
| 9,000-11,999 | 2787 | 15 | 26 | 62 |
| 12,000-14,999 | 2144 | 11 | 20 | 82 |
| 15,000-19,999 | 1236 | 7 | 12 | 94 |
| 20,000 and Over | 752 | 4 | 7 | 100%* |
| Subtotal | (10,857) | (58) | 100%* | --- |
| Consider the Confidential | 1160 | 6 | | |
| Do Not Know | 6662 | 36 | | |
| Total | 18,679 | 100% | | |

* Subtotals are one higher due to rounding to nearest percent.

## FINANCIAL AID NEEDS

Table 9 shows the resporse of the Fall 1973 Illinois community college freshmen to the ACT item dealing with expected financial aid needed by them to help meet college expenses. Approximately one-half (47%) of all community college freshmen indicated that they would need financial assistance all through college with an additional 13% indicating that financial assistance would be needed after the first year.

Table 9

FINANCIAL AID NEEDS OF
ILLINOIS PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE 1973 FRESHMEN
AS INDICATED ON THE ACT PROFILE

| | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Financial Aid Needed All Through College | 45% | 49% | 47% |
| Financial Aid Needed After the First Year | 14% | 12% | 13% |
| Financial Aid Probably Not Needed | 41% | 39% | 40% |

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